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Summary record of the 32nd meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 111: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2004-2005 (*continued*) (A/57/16, A/57/85 and A/57/636)

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Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/57/L.70: Khmer Rouge trials (*continued*) (A/57/7/Add.22; A/C.5/57/29)

1 **Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan) said that, while the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/57/85) was a preliminary estimate of the resources that might be required during the biennium, it was nevertheless important to set the correct tone for the budgetary process ahead.

2. On the subject of special political missions, his delegation concurred with the view of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) that provision for such activities in the outline should not exceed $170 million gross, in the light of the reduced requirements for missions whose mandates were about to be terminated or altered.

3. It also shared the view expressed in paragraph 13 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/57/636) that the overall level of estimated requirements for the biennium 2004-2005 would depend, in part, on the decision of the General Assembly on the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission. That decision should be reflected in the proposed outline.

4. The proposed programme budget outline submitted by the Secretary-General (A/57/85) included an amount of $40.5 million for new or expanded activities to enhance capacity for meeting the United Nations Millennium Declaration goals. While his delegation attached importance to the activities aimed at meeting those goals, the elements provided in the Secretary-General's report did not offer a convincing case for the provision of the stated amount and a further explanation from the Secretariat would therefore be welcome.

5. With regard to the provision for appropriate information technology and common services infrastructure, his delegation agreed that such technology and infrastructure should be brought to levels that would not prejudice programme delivery. However, there was insufficient information to support the estimated requirements indicated in the Secretary-General's report and his delegation looked forward to discussing the issue in the context of the proposed information technology strategy to be resubmitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/239.

6. Lastly, his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposals for realigning programmes to cope with new challenges and to address the Organization's new priorities. In doing so, however, account should be taken of the need to reallocate resources to high-priority activities from low-priority or obsolete activities when formulating the proposed programme budget outline. The relationship between the level of

the budget and its affordability by Member States should also be taken into consideration.

7. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, as he had stated previously, he wished to remain flexible regarding the organization of the Committee's limited available time, but also wished to ensure that reports which had been submitted late to the Committee could be duly considered. He accordingly asked the Chairman not to close the debate on the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2004-2005, as the Group of 77 and China wished to make a formal statement on that matter the following day, prior to the informal consultations.

8. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he fully understood that the Group of 77 and China needed to have enough time to develop a coordinated position. Because the Committee's time was scarce, he wished, first, to ask whether all the remaining documents dealing with programme budget implications could be made available for consideration the following day, and, second, to suggest that the Committee might begin discussing the substance of the issues concerned informally, while committing itself to taking no firm decisions until the remaining documents had been received and the remaining formal statements had been heard.

9. **The Chairman** requested information from the Secretariat on the status of the documents regarding programme budget implications which the Committee was awaiting.

10. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that several statements of programme budget implications were awaiting consideration by the Second Committee. One relating to a draft resolution regarding commodities (A/C.2/57/L.5) would not be referred to the Fifth Committee as it involved no net increase in resources and had no implications for the revised appropriation for 2002-2003. A draft resolution regarding further implementation of the programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States (A/C.2/57/L.20) would also not be referred to the Fifth Committee, because certain financial requirements which it generated would be offset by changes to the schedule of the Commission on Sustainable Development and it would have no effect on the revised appropriation for 2002-2003.

11. An oral presentation of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution on the matter of ensuring effective support for sustained follow-up to the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development (A/C.2/57/L.44) had been given to the Second Committee, but the latter did not intend to discuss the matter immediately, preferring to wait until the programme budget implications had been provided in written form. Once the Second Committee had completed its debate, the Advisory Committee would be called upon to make recommendations to the Fifth Committee on how to cope with the $203,200 in additional financial requirements from the programme budget for 2002-2003 which that draft resolution entailed. It would be highly unusual for a statement of programme budget implications to be referred directly to the Fifth Committee without first being considered by the Advisory Committee. Discussion of the matter by the Fifth Committee would therefore have to be scheduled accordingly.

12. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked for confirmation that he had correctly understood the course of action discussed. One paragraph of the draft resolution before the Second Committee (A/C.2/57/L.44) appeared to refer to covering expenses by utilization of existing resources. He wished to know whether it was that paragraph which contained programme budget implications. If it did, and if the draft resolution was adopted by the Second Committee, he assumed that the matter would be referred to the Advisory Committee on the morning of Wednesday, 11 December, and then to the Fifth Committee on the afternoon of the same day.

13. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the draft resolution in question called for a change in the activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and that the Department's allocations for 2003 and for 2004-2005 would therefore need to be reviewed. The available budgetary and extrabudgetary resources had been examined, and those resources would be reflected in the statement of programme budget implications. The draft resolution did indeed refer to the utilization of existing resources.

14. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary

Questions) said that the Advisory Committee was scheduled to meet the following morning and would consider any statements of programme budget implications which were referred to it. Unless there were unforeseen complications, it would be able to make an oral report on such programme budget implications the following afternoon.

15. At the previous meeting of the Committee, the United States representative had asked why, in the light of the Secretary-General's intention to review the activities of the Organization for continuing relevance, the Advisory Committee had proposed a total that did not take account of certain essential factors. The explanation was that the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2004-2005 was not a budget proposal, so the Advisory Committee had not subjected it to the kind of detailed examination that would be expected for a budget proposal. The Secretary-General's comments had related to the proposed programme budget itself. It was not in the mandate of the Advisory Committee to prejudge the results of his review of all the activities of the Organization. Once those results were known, the Secretariat would indicate what resources were required and the impact on the proposed programme budget, and refer the matter to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee would make recommendations to the General Assembly in its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

16. **The Chairman** said that the information from the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee indicated that the outstanding statements of programme budget implications would not be available before the following afternoon. Time was short, so a possible solution would be to take the unusual step of beginning informal discussion on the issues in question before the formal debate had taken place, on the understanding that the Group of 77 and China would be able to make a formal statement the following morning and that the Committee would not take a final decision until it had heard that statement.

17. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, asked whether the Chairman's suggestion related to discussion of the outstanding statements of programme budget implications or to the proposed programme budget outline for 2004-2005. In the case of the outstanding statements of programme budget implications, he was concerned that the Committee simply did not have enough information for a meaningful discussion. His wish was to facilitate rather than hamper the business of the Committee; he merely wished to know what to expect the following day. There had been an unfortunate tendency to decide on one course of action during a formal meeting only to be faced with a different course of action in informal consultations.

18. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he concurred fully with the view expressed by the representative of Venezuela that all statements of programme budget implications must be considered together. However, he proposed that the meetings of the Committee should be organized so that discussion regarding programme budget implications could proceed, leaving aside the final figures, which required consideration by the Advisory Committee before being passed to the Fifth Committee. He had in mind a document similar to that which the Committee had produced following its discussion of programme budget implications in 2001, namely a highly structured paper containing a series of headings under which the Committee set out its recommendations to the General Assembly. If the Committee was able to decide on the wording of that basic framework in advance, if necessary by providing various alternatives in parentheses for insertion or deletion, all that would remain would be to finalize the text once the necessary figures were available. That would represent a wise use of the little time remaining. While he wished to reiterate that the Committee continued to demand that it should have all the documents it required before taking its decisions, he was simply proposing a practical response to a practical problem.

19. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the proposal of the representative of Denmark was viable, provided that the Committee agreed to refrain from deciding on the amounts involved before it had all the necessary information.

20. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to proceed in the manner proposed by the representative of Denmark and endorsed by the representative of Venezuela.

21. *It was so decided.*

22. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation had been unaware of the understanding reached that the Committee would proceed to hold informal

consultations on the proposed programme budget outline before the Group of 77 and China had had an opportunity to state its views in a formal meeting. The Group of 77 and China represented a large block of Member States and must be given an opportunity to state its views on the same conditions as other smaller groups.

23. **The Chairman** noted that, with the concurrence of the representative of Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Committee had already taken a decision to hold informal consultations pending the formal statement that the Group of 77 and China would make the following day. Given the severe time constraints under which the Committee was operating, he hoped that the representative of Cuba would agree to the proposed departure from the Committee's normal practice.

24. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that, notwithstanding the concurrence of the Group of 77 and China, her delegation could not agree to the proposal to proceed to informal consultations on the item before the Group had had an opportunity to state its views in the general debate. The whole purpose of the general debate was to identify positions on which agreement might later be reached in informal consultations.

25. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) expressed concern about the Committee's proposed departure from its normal practice. Any informal consultations before completion of the general debate on the item would be unbalanced, since members would be unaware of the positions of all groups.

26. **The Chairman** said that, although it was procedurally correct, the new proposal that the Group of 77 and China should make its formal statement before the Committee proceeded to informal consultations would place a severe strain on the Committee's programme of work. He appealed to members for their cooperation and understanding.

27. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that he had agreed to the proposal put forward by the representative of Denmark, on behalf of the European Union, that the Committee should proceed to informal consultations, only insofar as it concerned the statements of programme budget implications. As he understood it, discussion of the proposed programme budget outline had not been part of the proposal.

28. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, regretted the difficulty that some delegations had in proceeding along the lines he had proposed. His proposal had been made for the sole purpose of expediting the Committee's work. He wished to place on record the European Union's deep concern about the way in which the non-availability of documentation had compromised the Committee's ability to complete its work. In order not to waste further valuable time, the Committee should take up any outstanding items for which the necessary documents were already available. He regretted that the Committee had been unable to proceed in a more transparent and efficient manner.

29. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to rescind its earlier decision and to await the formal statement of the Group of 77 and China on the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2004-2005 before proceeding to informal consultations on the item.

30. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.